2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

192 As may be supposed, the vocabulary of such a barbarous race is very limited. It only contains such phrases as are required to describe the most striking objects of nature, and those which enter into the daily life of the people themselves. So rude and primitive is their dialect that the most ordinary objects and actions of life are described by quaint periphrasis. As, for example, to walk is "to beat (the ground) with hammers"; a child is "a bud"; the grains of rice are "round things"; an elephant is not inappropriately termed "a beast like a mountain"; while the fallow deer of the island (*Axis maculata*) are, with the strictest accuracy, called "spotted animals"; and wild boars, "long-snouted ones."*

They use none of the honorifics so profusely common in Singhalese, the pronoun "*to*," "thou" being alone used, whether they are addressing each other, or those whose position would entitle them to outward respect. They can neither read nor write, nor 212 can I trace the faintest vestige of their ever having possessed any literature, in the lowest sense in which that word can be used.† They count with difficulty on their fingers, and so little notion 802 805 have they of time, that it is difficult to make them understand that they are to keep an engagement at a more remote period than the next day.

I have compared the scant and unsatisfactory collection of 197 words, which I have been able to make, with almost all the vocabularies of the aboriginal tribes of India, published in the *Asiatic Society's Journal*, and though in some of them I have found isolated instances of striking resemblance, these are probably merely accidental. The subject is one which requires further investigation: and a careful examination of the dialect, by any one competent to perform the task, would be interesting, although I question if it would elicit more than we at present know of the origin of the Veddahs.

I append to this paper, as a specimen of their patois, a list of some of their words, distinguishing between those which probably

* It is very curious that the Veddah term for the Ceylon elk, the Samba deer of India (*Rusa Aristotelis*), is "gawra," *vide* Tennent's remarks in his *Natural History of Ceylon*, p. 49, on the tradition of the former existence in Ceylon of the "Bos gaurus" of Hindustan. I have myself heard the "gaur" described by old Kandyans, who have seen it in the mountain forests, as an animal with, as it were, the body of a buffalo and the legs of an elk. And there are many places still bearing the name "gaura," as, for example, besides gaura elica, mentioned by Tennent, gaura kelle—the forest of the gaur—gaura kanda; and there is a kind of grass called gaura mannie. It is curious that the elk should be called gaura by the Veddahs, and by no one else.

† About ten years ago, the Government established a school for the Veddahs of Bintenne, but it proved a failure.

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

of the bark of the Ritti (*Antiaris toxicaria*) for males, and a sort of leaf-skirt for the females.

No jewellery was worn by the males or females. Sometimes a necklace made of shells ("Bellan") was worn by the younger females, but such things as rings were unknown to the earlier Veddas.

They had no idea of time beyond the subdivision of the 24 hours into two divisions, viz., that of light and darkness. Other than this there was no computation except a man's knowledge of a certain striking event that happened in his "small time," but how long ago that was could not be stated.

The taking of a woman to wife required mainly the sanction of the girl's father, after which a few exchanges might be made in signification of the consent of parties. After this the man and woman lived together, while before they would not so much as dare speak to one another in public, unless related.

The age of the woman was invariably extremely youthful at the time of her "marriage," and even at the present day, notwithstanding the comparative civilization of the modern Vedda descendants, youthful marriages still prevail.

I found in response to my inquiries in all parts of the Vedda country that I visited, that 12 years was a common age for a girl to be taken to wife at. In one village I was present at an inquiry by a headman into a case where the girl was only 8. In this case the headman expressed the opinion that the marriage was "very bad."

My informant told me that with the Veddas there was no custom for the woman, when about to give birth to a child, to go to a separate house or hut for the purpose, but that this custom had only come in later.

Among the Veddas there was no such thing as prostitution, nor could I learn that there was polyandry.

The bearing age of women would be at about 14, that of puberty being a year earlier.

Women would have children up to about 28, and as might be expected from the condition of youthful cohabitation for one or two years prior to puberty, the proportion of males and females in a family would be pretty nearly equal. On

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

away more frightened than you. A scratching noise under your pillow may lead to the discovery of a scorpion or a centipede. Beetles, moths, biting ants, and insects of all descriptions investigate and experiment with you. But you soon learn to ignore these little draw-backs and drowse to the lullaby of some wood-land songster.

Tropical Nature is a stern mistress; her favours are never unalloyed. For him who would seek her she holds grievances in store, grievances that enhance the very joy they encumber; toning down ecstasy lest it pall with surfeit; giving to the contemplation of foregone experience that unfettered pleasure the reality denies, prompting us in after years to say, forgetful of all the hardships, "those were happy days we had".

The Verugal where it joined the Mahaweli was at this season an insignificant stream. Quite a colony of tobacco growers flourished here. Very picturesque are these settlements or *thethes* as they are called. Four to six huts stand some distance apart in clearings along the bank, most of them beautifully overspread with melon-creepers. Every hut has its vegetable garden; and standing before them, like sentinels, are the draw-wells, usually in couples, that feed the tobacco plots direct from the river. The lowing of cattle under the superb trees that stud the clearing, the crowing of cocks, the sound of human voices complete the atmosphere of rural domesticity in this wild land and furnish scenes which would rejoice the heart of a painter.

Putting up one evening in a coconut grove owned by a Moor we found an unkempt ill-clad fellow seated on his haunches staring at some simple wares a pedlar was displaying. They told us he was a Vedda from a village some miles away. Becoming restless under our scrutiny he walked off. I followed him to his miserable shelter, where I found his daughter, a puny girl of four, covered with ulcers. Edging up towards her father she stared at us distrustfully with the eyes of a startled doe. A few broken pots were their sole belongings. The bond of tender solicitude that united these human derelicts, of no consequence except to each other, was indeed a touching sight. I asked the man what he did for a living. He said he "earned a rupee for two months work". He knew neither his nor his daughter's age, and when pressed for an answer said irritably, "What do I know of age? Am I a man who knows anything about age?" Blessed mortal!

We gave him a coin which he at first refused, and only accepted with persuasion; he had evidently never handled one like it before, for he looked at it puzzled and suspicious; and when the amount it represented was explained to him he was not enlightened.

"He knows nothing," said the Moor vociferously. "Ask him to count six and see if he can. He's a real bull. What does he know? He's a Vedda. For thirty-six cents he will bring a kerosene-tinful of *bambara** honey, and," he added chuckling with subtle satisfaction, "he does not know what thirty-six cents is!"

The next day we saw in the distance the blue contours of Gunner's Quoin, the goal of our journey. The river had now become considerably shallower with broad stretches of its sandy bed exposed. As we punted along the shady border, we suddenly came upon a most realistic piece of ancient sculpture—the life-sized head of an elephant carved out of a

*Rock-bee, *Apis dorsata*